





Fall River / New Bedford Line Service Update

Morton Middle School, Fall River

June 5, 2025

Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority

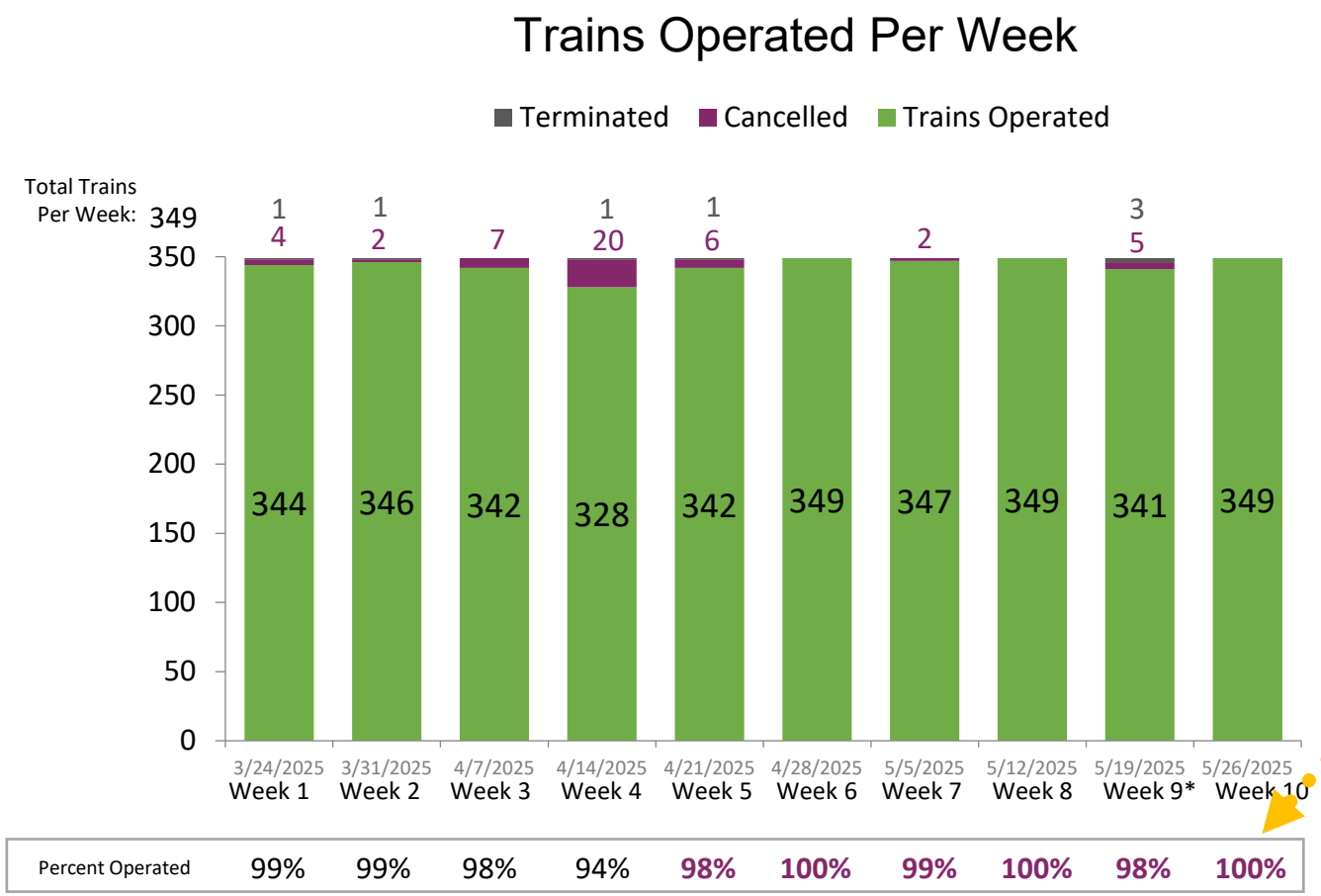
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Agenda

1. Update on Service
2. Train Horns: A Lifesaving Warning
3. About Quiet Zones
4. Vibration and Noise Mitigation
5. Questions and Next Steps

Update on Service (part 1)

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Since the launch of service, the Fall River/New Bedford Line has operated the majority of scheduled trips each week.

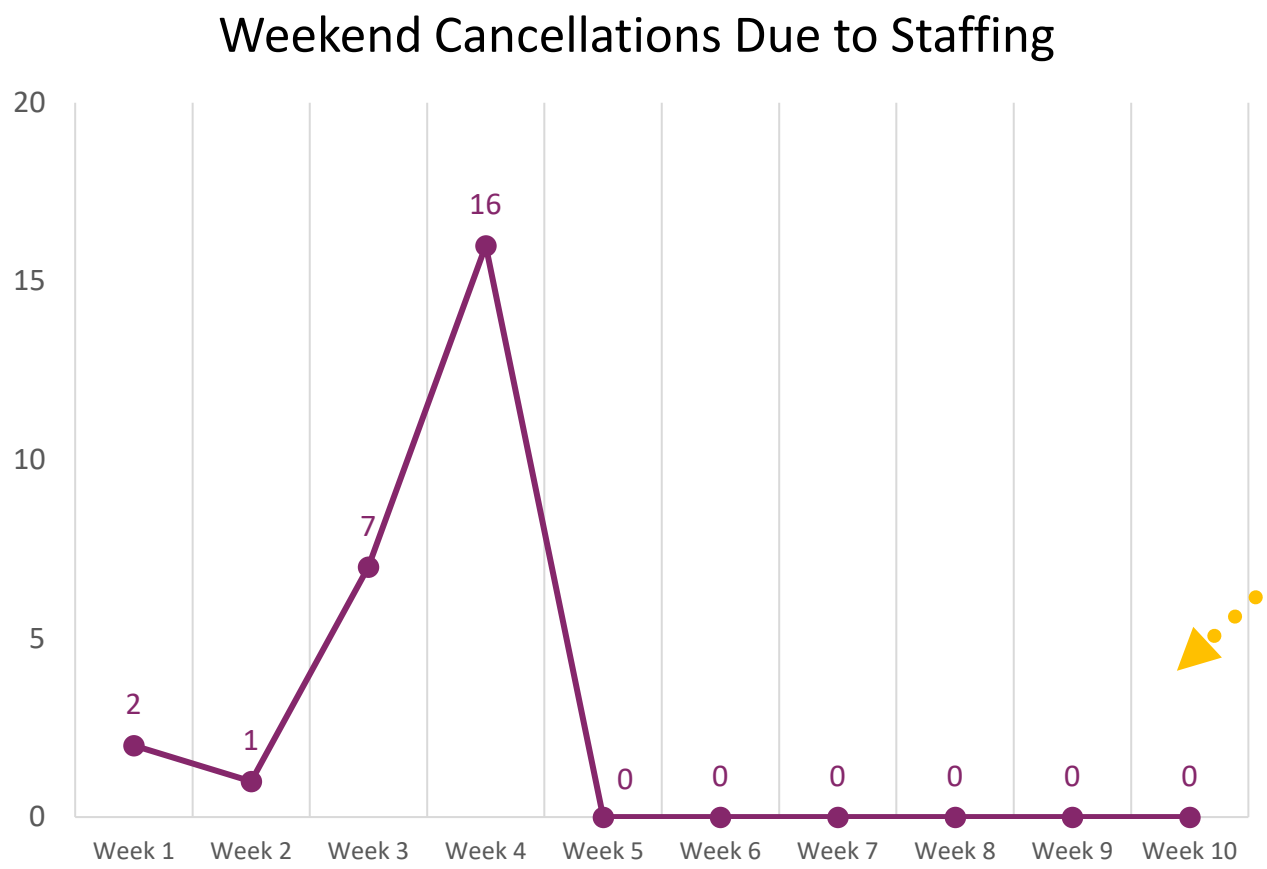
While Week 4 saw the highest number of cancellations, service delivery has steadily improved.

Over the past six weeks, the line has consistently achieved 98% to 100% of scheduled service.

*During Week 9, no cancellations were due to crew availability (fallen tree, trespasser strike, and mechanical issue)

Update on Service (part 2)

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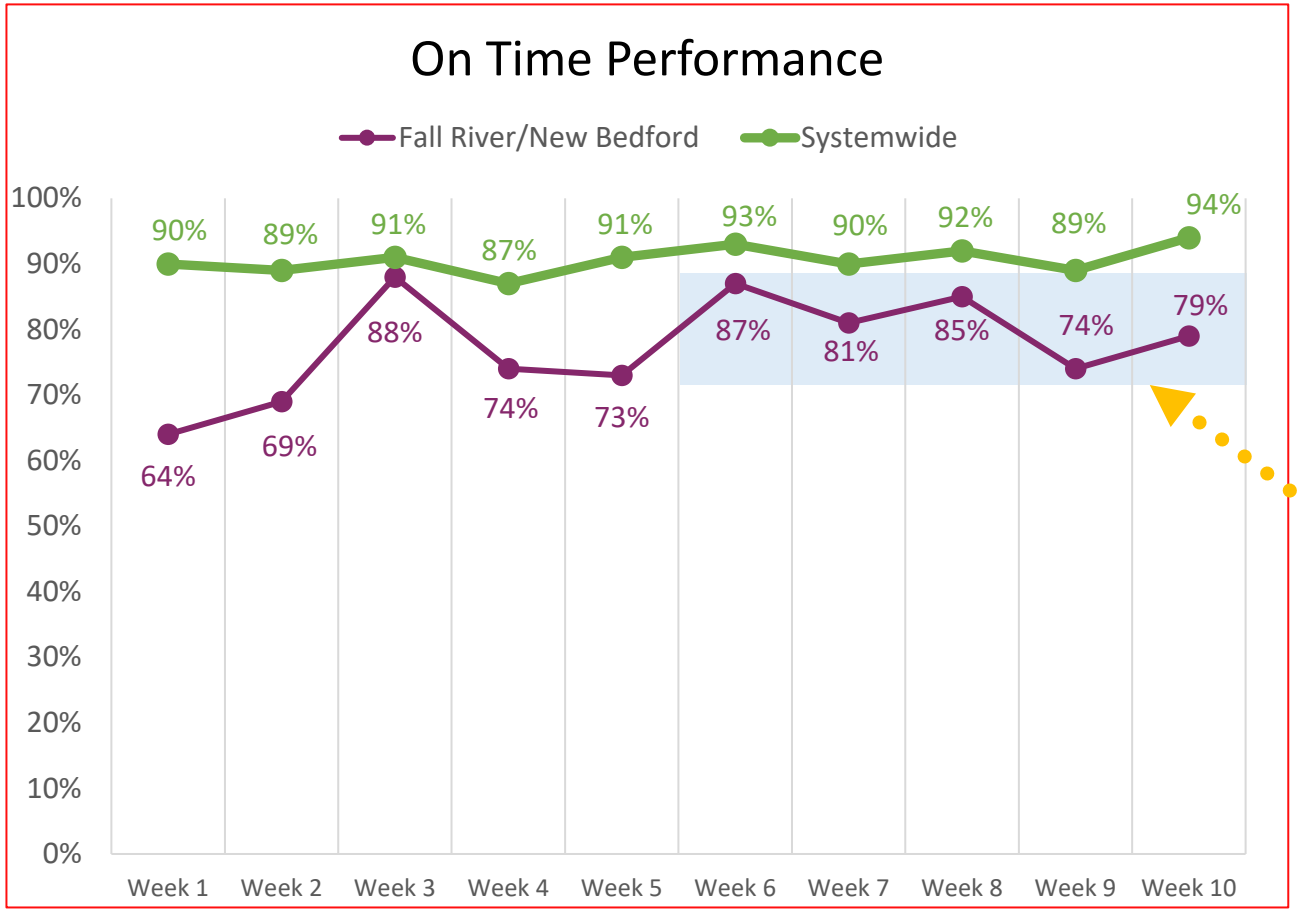
In the first weeks of service, several weekend trains were canceled due to staffing shortages, with a peak of 16 cancellations in Week 4.

Since then, staffing levels have improved significantly. For the past six weekends, all scheduled weekend trains have operated as planned.

In an effort to be as proactive as possible following service interruptions during the first few weekends, we canceled service and arranged for buses the fourth weekend. Those buses were not needed as service ran normally.

Update on Service (part 3)

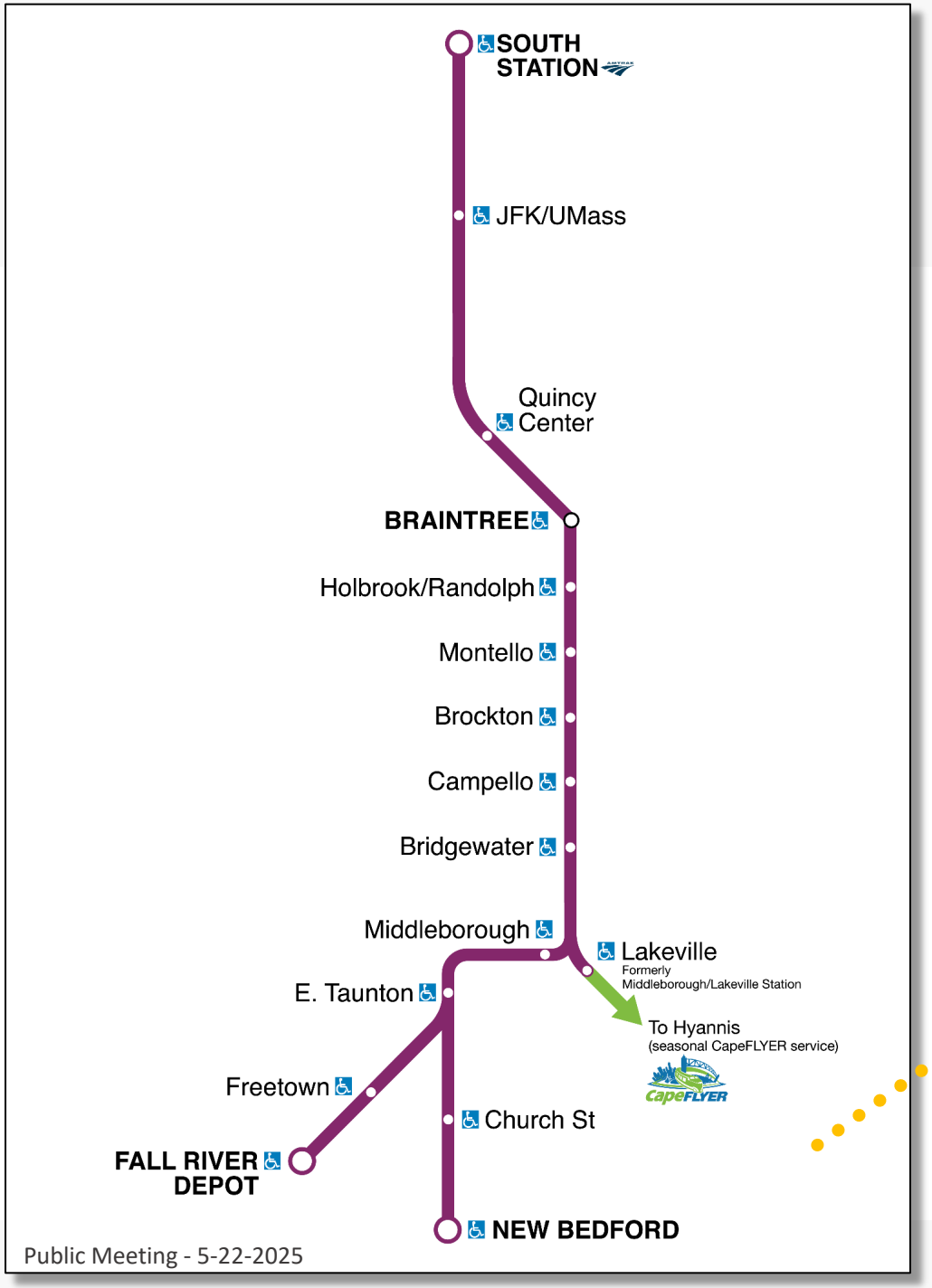
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On-time performance has improved significantly, rising from 64% in Week 1 to 74% - 87% since Week 6.

While performance fluctuated in the early weeks due to startup conditions and single-track coordination, recent trends show greater consistency.

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Fall River/New Bedford Line

For timetables, schedule updates, and alerts on the Fall River/New Bedford Line visit mbta.com

Train Horns: A Lifesaving Warning

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Train horns are a critical safety tool, alerting drivers, pedestrians, and cyclists that a train is approaching.

After states experimented with horn bans in the 1970s and 1980s, a federal study found increased nighttime collisions and fatalities. In response, Congress directed the FRA to regulate horn use nationwide, leading to the 2005 rule requiring horns to sound at all public crossings.

Since then, train horns have remained a federally required safety measure at public grade crossings. Horn use is the nationwide standard unless a Quiet Zone has been formally approved by the FRA.

While horns can be disruptive, they save lives and in newly activated corridors like South Coast Rail, they are especially important as communities adjust to the return of train service.

About Quiet Zones

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Quiet zones are federally regulated and must be initiated by municipalities. They are not granted or controlled by the MBTA.

To apply for a quiet zone:

- A municipality must apply to the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) to establish a quiet zone. The FRA typically requires a grade crossing diagnostic to assess safety conditions.

- Based on the assessment, the municipality must install supplemental safety measures (SSMs) such as:
 -Raised medians or channelization devices
 -Additional gates or signage
 -Roadway improvements to deter risky behavior
 -The municipality is responsible for funding and maintaining these safety upgrades.

- Once upgrades are complete, the FRA notifies the MBTA that horn use can cease at designated crossings.

Trains may still use their horn in a Quiet Zone during emergencies, when workers are near the track, or when other hazards are present. If required safety measures are not maintained, the FRA will direct the MBTA to resume sounding the horn.

Vibration and Noise Mitigation

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- The MBTA implemented a series of strategies to reduce vibration and noise along the South Coast Rail corridor. These efforts were guided by Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) regulations and informed by detailed environmental and engineering analyses.
- To address vibration, the MBTA used continuous welded rail, which produces significantly less vibration than traditional jointed rail. In addition, ballast mats were installed in specific locations where the analysis indicated greater potential for vibration impacts. These measures are outlined in Chapter 4 of the Final Environmental Impact Report (FEIR).
- For noise, the MBTA created a residential mitigation program following FRA criteria. Impacted homeowners were eligible to receive up to $5,000 per decibel of noise impact, with a cap of $30,000 per home. Homeowners could choose from a range of mitigation options, including sound insulation treatments, air-conditioning systems, or solid fencing for visual and sound screening. Eligibility was determined based on distance from the track, train speed, topography, and existing ambient noise levels.
- To date, $1.88 million in noise mitigation funds have been distributed to 88 participating homeowners (with 173 total dwelling units).

If you believe your property may qualify for future mitigation, please contact **scrnoise@mbta.com** for more information.



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Blue signs at every railroad crossing provide information for reporting and problems or emergencies.

CALL: 1-800-522-8236

MBTA Commuter Rail Safety website: www.mbta.com/CRSafety

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Questions and Next Steps

Visit mbta.com for more information

Contact MBTA Customer Support at www.mbta.com/customer-support